(d) the steps being proposed by the Government to improve the situation of these workers?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM) : (a) to (d) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

[Translation]

Development of Railways

2955. SHRI PANKAJ CHOWDHARY :
SHRI MAHENDRA SINGH BHATI :

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have formulated any new scheme for the development of Railways and to provide more facilities to the passengers;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the time by which this scheme is likely to be implemented; and

(d) the number of passengers likely to be benefited under this scheme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) to (d) Development of Railway stations to provide more facilities to the passengers is a continuous process. Facilities at stations are upgraded depending on the growth and requirement of passenger traffic handled at that station. At present there is no new scheme.

Availability of Rail Engines

2956. SHRI DATTA MEGHE : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there are sufficient rail engines in the country which are in good condition;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the new electric engines are being used in place of old coal engines;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the number of coal engines replaced by the electric engines so far during this year alongwith the number of new engines built during the above period?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) As no 1.4.96. there were 2387 electric locos, 4313 diesel locos & 209 steam locos on Indian Railways.

(c) and (d) The electric engines are used in the sections which are electrified.

(e) No electric loco has replaced steam loco during this year. For 1996-97, 195 electric locos and 150 diesel electric locos have been planned for production/procurement.

Sponge Iron Units

2957. PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA :
SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI :

Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the news item captioned "Tough time ahead for sponge iron units" appearing in *'Tribune'* dated December 27, 1996;

(b) if so, whether the manufactures of sponge iron of the country have to face the problem due to the shortage of good quality coal and increase in the price of coal;

(c) if not, the reaction of the Government thereto;

(d) whether the representatives of the industry have drawn the Government attention to it; and

(e) if so, the action taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) to (d) The attention of the Government has been drawn to the newsitem captioned "Tough time ahead for sponge iron units" appearing in *"Tribune"* dated December 27, 1996. Sponge Iron Manufacturers Association have also expressed their concern about inadequate availability of required grades of non coking coal and increase in the price of coal.

(e) To increase the availability of coal, the Coal Mines Nationalisation Act, 1973 has been amended w.e.f. 9.6.1993 to allow development of captive mines by iron & steel manufacturers. This amendment also allows setting up of washeries for washing coal obtained from a mine. Further, the Government have proposed reduction of the basic custom duty on non coking coal from 20% to 10% in the Budget for 1997-98.

[English]

Selling of Scrap

2958. SHRI KACHARU BHAU RAUT : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the quantum of scrap sold by Railways during the current year so far; and

(b) The income earned therefrom?